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# LEADERSHIP AMIDST THE PANDEMIC: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BASIC EDUCATION-LEARNING CONTINUITY PLAN (BE-LCP)

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to the educational system, necessitating rapid adaptation. To address this, the Department of Education implemented the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), which focused on the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) and entrusted its implementation to school principals. This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to gain insight into the experiences of 33 public school heads in the City of Batac's Schools Division during the implementation of the BE-LCP, specifically how they demonstrated leadership by the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) and the challenges they faced and practices they employed to overcome them.

Structured interviews were conducted to collect data, which was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that the school heads demonstrated strategic leadership abilities, efficiently managed school operations and resources, and supported remote teaching and learning with the help of teachers and parents who served as learning facilitators, using printed modular learning and supplemental materials. However, the school administrators encountered difficulties with enrollment, introducing the new teaching method, staff involvement, accessibility of instructional resources, and collaboration with stakeholders. They overcame these obstacles with the help of parents, barangay authorities, the LGU, and other stakeholders.

The school heads successfully implemented the BE-LCP, demonstrating their resilience and adaptability in coping with unusual conditions and ensuring uninterrupted education for their pupils. To ensure that learning continues despite challenges or crises in the future, it is recommended that school heads remain focused on the department's vision, mission, core values, and objectives, follow divisional standards, and adhere to their mantra.

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### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the global education system, with the temporary closures of schools affecting approximately 1.6 billion learners worldwide, as reported by Tadesse (2020) and the United Nations (2020). To address the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Department of Education in the Philippines introduced the Basic Education-Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP), aimed at ensuring continuity of learning through various modalities while prioritizing Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).

In response to the BE-LCP, the Schools Division of the City of Batac implemented printed modular learning as the preferred delivery modality for its schools. However, this sudden shift to home-based modular learning has presented significant challenges for school leaders and teachers, requiring urgent response and critical leadership as highlighted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (2020). School heads play a critical role in implementing emergency response measures amidst the pandemic, connecting education authorities, teachers, students, and communities, as emphasized by Whang (2021).

Given the complexity of the school heads' responsibilities, a study was conducted to explore their experiences in leading and managing their schools during the implementation of the BE-LCP. The study focused on the five domains of school leadership quality specified in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) by the Department of Education (2020), with findings highlighting the challenges encountered and strategies employed by school heads to address them. The best practices of school heads in coping with the challenges were identified, aiming to encourage other school leaders to adopt similar strategies when faced with similar situations.

To ensure the continuity of learning despite crises, school heads should remain focused on the future while dealing with immediate challenges, as highlighted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (2020). School heads are the heart of the education system, and their ability to effectively address the challenges of the crisis is paramount to ensuring continuity of learning. The study's findings can serve as a basis for proposed actions to support and assist school heads in their leadership roles in implementing the learning continuity plan.

## ***Literature Review***

The purpose of the literature review is to deepen the understanding of the study's concept and to establish theories to be investigated. The presentation of the literature review is arranged thematically.

### ***Theoretical and Conceptual Framework***

#### ***Contingency Theory***

Hodgson and White proposed the Contingency Theory, which emphasizes that effective leadership is determined by various variables in a specific setting and that there is no one-size-fits-all leadership style. In other words, good leaders need to find the right balance between behaviors, needs, and context, and evaluate the needs of their followers and the situation at hand (Corporate Finance Institute, 2021).

Kendraa (2020) conducted a study using the Contingency Theory as a framework to explore the leadership experiences of school heads during the pandemic and the implementation of the BE-LCP. The study analyzed how school heads assessed the needs of their schools and stakeholders, adapted their leadership styles, and made strategic decisions to overcome challenges. Through the lens of the Contingency Theory, the study showed how school heads applied contingency leadership approaches to address the complexities and uncertainties they faced effectively.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

The Transformational Leadership theory, developed by James MacGregor Burns and expanded upon by Bernard M. Bass, highlights the significance of leaders and followers working collaboratively to attain higher levels of morale and motivation (Kendraa, 2020). Bass's theory comprises four components: Intellectual Stimulation, which fosters creativity and challenges the status quo among followers; Individualized Consideration, which provides personalized support and encouragement to individual followers and encourages open communication; Inspirational Motivation, which entails having a clear vision and motivating followers to pursue goals with passion; and Idealized Influence, which necessitates that leaders serve as role models for their followers (Kendraa, 2020).

In this study, the Theory of Transformational Leadership was employed to investigate how school leaders influenced and inspired various stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, learners, barangay officials, and others, to embrace changes in the educational system and tackle the challenges presented by the pandemic. The study also described how school leaders mobilized stakeholders toward the successful implementation of the BE-LCP (Kendraa, 2020).

### ***Adaptive Leadership***

The Adaptive Leadership theory, developed by Ronald Heifetz, asserts that leaders must mobilize individuals to tackle challenging problems, including adapting to change and being inclusive. It emphasizes the distinction between leadership and authority, with leadership requiring influence and the ability to mobilize rather than positional power. Heifetz identified six behaviors that individuals can exhibit to demonstrate adaptive leadership, including stepping out to the balcony to gain a new perspective, recognizing the nature of adaptive challenges, regulating distress, maintaining disciplined attention, giving the work back to the people, and listening to leadership voices from below, including out-group members, marginalized individuals, and the external community (Johnson, 2017).

Considering the demand for the new educational landscape, school leaders must adapt to various challenges to successfully implement the BE-LCP. They must ensure that all efforts are focused on implementing the plan, and the Adaptive Leadership theory can help determine their adaptability during the pandemic (Johnson, 2017).

### ***Effective School Leadership in Times of Crisis***

According to Smith & Riley (2012), school leaders must possess several critical attributes during times of crisis, including the ability to cope with ambiguity, make decisive decisions, think creatively, persevere, work with people, and communicate effectively. In addition, Lenhoff et al. (2019) introduced the Triage, Transition, and Transform (3Ts) model, which highlights the importance of different leadership approaches during each phase of a crisis. During the triage phase, leaders may adopt an authoritative approach, while in the transition phase, they must adjust to new ways of working. In the transformation phase, leaders must balance the needs of the affected community with the desire to return to normal routines.

Moreover, Mutch (2014), AITSL (2014), Smith & Riley (2012), the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (n.d.), and the United Nations General Assembly (2016) emphasize

the opportunity for schools to act as community centers, adapt strategically, and build resilience during the recovery period. To support learning and growth after a crisis, school leaders should evaluate what has worked, decide what to retain or develop, and ensure successful practices are integrated into the "new normal." Reflecting and learning from critical incidents can also help revisit disaster/crisis policies (Myors, 2013).

In the current pandemic, Kerrissey (2020) identifies four lessons for leaders, which include acting with urgency, communicating with transparency, responding productively to missteps, and engaging in constant updating. Halili's (2021) study on education leadership under the new normal education reveals that school heads operate in a manageable and flexible way, collaborating with stakeholders and leading with respect and fairness. Similarly, Olayvar (2021) found that school heads' new normal leadership positively impacted the collaborative school culture, with adaptability being the best predictor of a collaborative school culture.

### ***Statement of the Problems***

This study investigated the challenges faced by school leaders in implementing the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) during the pandemic and examined the practices they employed to overcome those challenges. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

**1. How do school heads implement the provisions of BE-LCP along the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads' (PPSSH) five domains of leadership:**

- 1.1 leading strategically;***
- 1.2 managing school operations and resources;***
- 1.3 focusing on teaching and learning;***
- 1.4. developing self and others; and***
- 1.5. building connections?***

**2. What are the challenges encountered in the implementation of BE-LCP?**

**3. How are these challenges addressed?**

### ***Assumption***

The study posits that the experiences of the school heads in the implementation of the BE-LCP in the Schools Division of the City of Batac are representative of the experiences of school heads in other divisions or regions in the Philippines.

### ***Scope and Delimitations***

The scope of this study is focused on the experiences of the 26 elementary and 7 secondary school heads in the implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) in the Schools Division of the City of Batac during the pandemic. The study also identified the challenges encountered by the school heads in implementing the BE-LCP and the practices they employed to overcome these challenges. The investigation is delimited to the school heads of the Schools Division of the City of Batac.

***The delimitations of this study include the following:***

The study was conducted only in the Schools Division of the City of Batac, and the findings may not apply to other regions or school divisions in the Philippines.

The study focused only on the experiences of school heads and did not include other stakeholders such as teachers, parents, or students.

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design, and the findings are limited to the interpretations of the participants' experiences.

The study was conducted during a specific period, and the findings may not reflect the current situation in the implementation of the BE-LCP.

The study only used structured interviews as a data collection method, and other methods such as focus group discussions or observations were not utilized.

***Locale of the Study***

The study was conducted only in the Schools Division of the City of Batac

***Population***

The scope of this study was focused on the experiences of the 26 elementary and 7 secondary school heads in the implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) in the Schools Division of the City of Batac during the pandemic

***Data Gathering Instruments***

This study utilized structured interviews and thematic analysis to analyze the data. The researchers manually transcribed the recordings, extracted codes, clustered them into categories, and determined themes from these clusters. They ensured the validity and reliability of their interpretations through various measures, including the repeated checking of codes, categories, and themes to prevent preconceived notions or biases from influencing the findings. By meticulously checking their work, the researchers maintained the trustworthiness of their analysis and provided insightful observations on the challenges and practices encountered by school heads in implementing the BE-LCP during the pandemic.

***Research Methodology***

In this study, appropriate research methodologies were utilized, such as the research design, data gathering instruments, population, the locale of the study, data gathering procedures, and statistical treatment of data, to ensure the accuracy and validity of the results.

## ***Research Design***

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological research design to describe the experiences of 33 school heads in implementing BE-LCP in the City of Batac during the pandemic. Participants were selected via total enumeration and interviewed using a structured approach. Ethical guidelines were followed, and data were analyzed to extract codes, categories, patterns, and themes.

## ***Ethical Considerations***

Written informed consent from the participants was obtained before the interviews, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant authorities before conducting the study.

The researchers also took care to minimize any potential harm or discomfort that the participants may have experienced during the interviews. They made sure that the questions were not intrusive or overly personal, and that the interviews were conducted in a private and comfortable setting.

Additionally, the researchers ensured that the data were securely stored and only accessible to authorized personnel. They also made sure that any personal identifiers were removed from the transcripts to protect the participants' confidentiality.

## ***Data Presentation and Analysis***

This part presents data that were gathered through structured interviews. The data are presented following the statement of the problems:

DepEd mandated the BE-LCP through Order No. 12, s. 2020 to ensure uninterrupted education during the pandemic. School heads are responsible for implementing the BE-LCP and meeting the standards set out in the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads' (PPSSH) five domains of leadership namely: leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. Below is a table summarizing the implementation of the BE-LCP by school heads across these 5 domains of leadership.

**Table 1. Emerged themes about how school heads implemented the provisions of BE-LCP along the five domains**

Domain	Emerged Themes	f
Leading Strategically	Leading by example	25
	Acting in urgency	26
	Providing clear direction	28
	Prioritizing the health and safety of the teachers and learners	33
	Providing inspiration	26
	Engaging all stakeholders	25
Managing School Operations and Resources	Eliciting active involvement of personnel	24
	Careful planning and budgeting	21
	Continuous updating of school data and information	19
Focusing on Teaching and Learning	Acting as a role model	17
	Close instructional supervision	18
	Continuous upskilling and reskilling of teachers	20
Developing Self and Others	Continuous professional improvement	23
	Regular communication with peers	20
	Performance tracking	19
	Careful assignment of teachers	18
Building Connections	Conduct different fora and platforms	25
	Communicated plans	28
	Dealing appropriately with diverse individuals	26

**Domain 1: Leading Strategically**

In the first domain of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), school heads play a crucial role in setting the direction, goals, and objectives of the school to maximize performance. The themes identified in this domain include leading by example, acting in urgency, providing clear direction, prioritizing health and safety, providing inspiration, and engaging all stakeholders.

School heads led by example spearheaded the preparation and implementation of the BE-LCP and involved all stakeholders in the process. They acted urgently in response to sudden changes and encouraged innovation among

teachers. Providing clear direction and important information was also crucial, as well as prioritizing the health and safety of teachers and students by adhering to health protocols.

Inspiring and motivating stakeholders through training, wellness programs, and learning resources was also a priority for school heads. Engaging all stakeholders through regular consultations and meetings was emphasized to ensure their participation and support in the implementation process. Overall, school heads in Domain 1 led strategically to achieve the Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Objectives of DepEd.

### **Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources**

The second domain emphasizes the importance of managing school operations and resources. This involves managing systems and processes in schools to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in the discharge of their function and optimizing organizational health. The PPSSH has identified several themes, including eliciting active involvement of personnel, careful planning and budgeting, and continuous updating of school data and information.

One of the themes is the importance of eliciting the active involvement of personnel. School heads recognize that gaining the active involvement of personnel and other stakeholders is crucial as key implementers of the learning continuity plan. They involve them in decision-making processes through attendance in webinars, training, School Learning Action Cells (SLACs), and In-Service Training (INSET). They collaborate with them in the implementation of alternative work arrangements, flexible working hours, and open communication lines to ensure the standard teacher-pupil ratio is maintained, ancillary services are equally distributed, and teaching loads and special assignments are assigned based on the specializations, abilities, and potentials of teachers.

Another theme is careful planning and budgeting to obtain efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency in matters of financial and material resources. School heads exercise careful planning and budgeting in the utilization of the school maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) fund, align their Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and their Annual Procurement Plan-Procurement Planning and Management Plan (APP-PPMP) with the BE-LCP, ensure that all liquidation reports are properly prepared and submitted, observe cost-effective measures for effective, accountable, and transparent utilization of resources, and manage resources received from stakeholders. They also conduct a regular inventory of all procured and acquired resources to ensure their ready availability at all times and determine what needs to be purchased and prioritized for distribution to teachers.

The third theme is the continuous updating of school data and information. School heads ensure that data in the Learner Information System (LIS), Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS), and Schools Division of the City of Batac Information System (SDCBInfosys) are continuously updated. They ensure the accuracy of these data, keep a soft and hard copy of them, compile them in established data banks, and ensure data privacy.

In summary, the PPSSH emphasizes the importance of managing school operations and resources. School heads can achieve this by eliciting the active involvement of personnel, carefully planning and budgeting, and continuously updating school data and information. These themes ensure that schools run efficiently, effectively, and transparently, ultimately leading to improved organizational health.

### **Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning**

Domain 3 of the study focuses on the critical role that school leaders play in promoting quality teaching and learning. The domain highlights the importance of instructional leadership in improving teachers' competencies and student learning outcomes. Three main themes were identified: acting as a role model, close instructional supervision, and continuous upskilling and reskilling of teachers.

Acting as a role model involves school heads contextualizing and implementing learning standards to inspire their teachers to do the same. By intellectually stimulating their teachers, school heads ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to learners. Technical assistance is provided to teachers through various platforms, such as meetings, INSETs, FGDs, and SLACs. School heads evaluate teacher outputs and conduct periodic reviews and curriculum audits to assess their competencies.

Close instructional supervision is another crucial theme. School heads monitor classroom activities by checking teachers' Weekly Home Learning Plans (WHLPs) and ensuring that class activities, written works, performance tasks, modules, and supplementary learning materials (SLMs) align with these plans. They also ensure that learning activity sheets (LAS) and assessment tools align with the most essential learning competencies (MELC) and are evaluated and quality-assured before distribution to learners. School heads validate assessment tools and analyze results to identify struggling learners and readers who require remediation and interventions.

Finally, continuous upskilling and reskilling of teachers involve conducting learning and development programs like INSET, LAC Sessions, FGDs, and online or face-to-face dialog with teachers. Peer teaching/observation, provision of technical assistance, and school-based teaching demonstration through LAC Sessions are also conducted. Post-observation and performance feedback are given to discuss teacher performance, and the results are utilized as a basis for the provision of technical assistance, coaching, and mentoring. These efforts ensure that teachers remain up-to-date with new teaching approaches and are equipped to handle challenges in the ever-changing landscape of education.

### **Domain 4: Developing Self and Others**

This fourth domain is centered on the responsibility of school leaders to improve themselves and their teachers for effective teamwork. The domain highlights four themes: continuous professional improvement, regular communication with peers, performance tracking, and careful assignment of teachers. School heads attend webinars, training, and meetings to continuously improve professionally, communicate regularly with peers to support each other during challenges, track performance to monitor targets, and assign teachers carefully based on their strengths and expertise. Feedback is provided through regular evaluations and coaching to resolve gaps identified.

### **Domain 5: Building Connections**

This domain focuses on how school heads engage with stakeholders to improve their school communities. The domain highlights the importance of effective communication, collaboration, and engagement with stakeholders to achieve the school's goals. The three themes are conducting various fora and platforms, clearly communicating

plans, and dealing appropriately with diverse individuals. School heads conducted various activities to engage stakeholders and inform them about the school's programs and projects. They also communicated plans, engaged stakeholders in the school's PPAs, and provided regular updates on the school's accomplishments. School heads recognized the importance of dealing with diverse personalities among stakeholders and adjusted to their needs to gain their trust, confidence, and support for the school's PPAs.

What are the challenges encountered in the implementation of BE-LCP?

To ensure the continuity of learning during this COVID-19 pandemic, the school heads need to hurdle different challenges in different areas in the implementation of the BE-LCP. Table 2 shows the challenges they encountered in the implementation of BE-LCP along the different areas of concern.

**Table 2. Emerged themes about the challenges of the school heads in the implementation of BE-LCP**

Area of Concern	Emerged Themes	f
Enrolment of learners	Parents' Doubts about home-based learning	19
Implementation of new learning modality	Lack of readiness of schools	21
	Lack of readiness for homes	24
Engagement of personnel	Unmotivated teachers	15
	Technical problems	30
Provision of learning and other materials	Insufficient budget for materials and equipment	24
	Time constraints	33
	Errors in the SLMs	33
Partnerships with community stakeholders	Poor parent support	20
	Cold response of some barangay officials	16

During the COVID-19 pandemic, school heads encountered a multitude of challenges in implementing the BE-LCP. These challenges spanned several areas, including enrolment, learning modality, personnel engagement, provision of materials, and community partnerships.

Parents' concerns about the effectiveness of home-based learning posed a challenge for school heads. Many parents cited a lack of time, expertise, and resources to guide their children in answering modules. Children with special needs and those without guidance at home were also a concern. Difficulties included the distribution and retrieval of modules, learners' hesitance to enroll, and difficulty in monitoring performance.

School heads also faced challenges in providing learning materials due to insufficient funding, broken equipment, and time constraints. Delays in the uploading and distribution of SLMs were also noted, despite careful production processes.

Personnel engagement was affected by technical problems, lack of motivation, and difficulties with connectivity. While some teachers were able to adapt to home-based learning, others were not motivated to learn new technologies or experienced issues with weak signals and unreliable internet connectivity.

Establishing partnerships with community stakeholders was also challenging for school heads. Poor parent support due to various reasons such as lack of understanding of the lessons, inability to help their children due to lack of gadgets or time, and even answering modules for their children was identified. Conflicts in the schedules of barangay health workers were also noted.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges for school heads in implementing the BE-LCP, highlighting the need for further support and resources to ensure that learning continues for all learners.

How did they address these challenges?

The implementation of the BE-LCP during the pandemic was successful, largely due to the effective leadership and management of school heads and the engagement of the entire school community. Despite the challenges encountered, they were able to overcome them and achieve their goal of providing quality education during the pandemic. The measures implemented can be grouped into four themes: close coordination with all sectors, maximizing available means of communication to engage stakeholders, maximizing available resources and seeking additional sources, and strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders. These themes highlight the importance of collaboration and partnerships with various sectors and stakeholders, as well as the need to make the most of available resources and means of communication to address the challenges of delivering quality education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 3 provides a summary of the measures implemented under each of these themes.

**Table 3. Emerged themes on how school heads addressed the challenges they encountered**

Emerged Themes	f
Close coordination with all sectors	25
Maximizing available means of communication to engage stakeholders.	20
Maximizing available resources and seeking other sources	18
Strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders	19

The school heads demonstrated excellent leadership and management skills during the pandemic by implementing the BE-LCP successfully. They worked closely with barangay officials and engaged stakeholders through various means of communication to ensure the enrolment of learners and the implementation of the learning modality. They monitored learners' progress through online/messenger, group chats, phone calls, text messages, and home visitation. The school heads also took measures to strengthen partnerships with community stakeholders, such as adjusting submission dates for modules, simplifying and lessening activities, and capacitating parents to become learning facilitators.

To maximize the available means of communication, the school heads used different communication methods such as phone calls, text messages, Facebook, distribution of brochures and letters, and orientation meetings to disseminate their plan, PPAs, and other important information. Teachers were given support and technical assistance through SLACs, INSET, and regular meetings. They scheduled staff to ensure that someone was present to receive visitors and monitor school activities, and teachers submitted weekly accomplishment reports to support daily attendance.

The school heads also realigned their MOOE funds to prioritize the purchase of health supplies, PPEs, and printing supplies and equipment. They repaired laptops, computers, and printers, and received donations of printing supplies and materials from stakeholders. They established a data bank for digitized LR materials and reused previously utilized/printed learning resources with corrections or enhanced activities.

Working closely with parents, barangay officials, LGUs, and other civic-spirited individuals was key to successfully implementing the BE-LCP. The school heads made sure to keep parents updated on school activities and the progress of their children through regular communication via virtual or face-to-face meetings and other online platforms. They included barangay officials in meetings with stakeholders to encourage their involvement in school programs and projects. The school heads submitted requests for equipment and project proposals to the LGU through the endorsement of SDO and posted the needs of their school on their FB page for all stakeholders to see. Donations of printing supplies and materials from LGUs, alumni, parents, and other civic-spirited individuals were also gratefully received.

### ***Results and Discussion***

The successful implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of effective leadership and management in times of crisis. School leaders must possess strategic thinking, effective management skills, and the ability to build connections with stakeholders to overcome challenges, such as enrollment, implementation of new learning modalities, engagement of personnel, provision of learning materials, and partnerships with community stakeholders.

School leaders must develop their crisis management skills, including communication, collaboration, and decision-making. Policymakers should invest in technological infrastructure and resources to support remote and blended learning, particularly in low-resource settings. Building partnerships and networks with various stakeholders is also essential in addressing challenges in education delivery during crises.

Similar studies have demonstrated the critical role of school leadership during crisis management. Sujatha and Sridhar (2021) highlighted the need for effective leadership to manage the transition to remote learning and ensure the well-being of students and staff. Song et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of leadership in managing the physical and emotional well-being of students and staff, ensuring equity in education delivery, and addressing the digital divide. Jennings and Greenberg (2021) found that effective leadership, collaboration, and communication were critical in ensuring the continuity of education. Furthermore, An et al. (2021) underscored the importance of community engagement in promoting social cohesion and resilience.

Overall, the successful implementation of the BE-LCP during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of effective leadership and management, collaboration with stakeholders, and investment in technological infrastructure and resources to support remote and blended learning. School leaders must develop their crisis management skills and build partnerships to overcome the challenges posed by crises.

## **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about an abrupt change in the educational landscape, presenting numerous challenges for school leaders and teachers as they shifted from face-to-face to printed modular learning modalities. However, the study found that the school heads of the Schools Division of the City of Batac successfully implemented the BE-LCP despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The success of the implementation can be attributed to the flexibility, adaptability, and quick response of the school heads to contingencies in education in the new normal. These school leaders were guided by the five domains required of effective 21<sup>st</sup>-century leaders, which paved the way for successful learning amidst the health crisis. The pandemic highlighted the need for strategic, transformative, and adaptive leaders who can set the direction of their schools, align and manage systems and processes, promote quality teaching and learning, nurture themselves and others, and engage their stakeholders to ensure learning continues during difficult times.

The school heads were at the forefront of making learning happen amidst the pandemic and in the successful implementation of the BE-LCP. Their leadership approaches align with those of Lenhoff et al. (2019), as mentioned by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (2020). Additionally, the school heads modeled their actions on the steps described by Kerrissey (2020), acting in urgency, communicating with transparency, responding productively to missteps, and engaging in constant updating of their stakeholders.

This leadership approaches support the Contingency Theory (Hodgson and White as cited in Corporate Finance Institute, 2021), Transformational Leadership Theory (James MacGregor Burns and expanded upon by Bernard M. Bass as cited in Kendraa, 2020), and Adaptive Leadership Theory (Ronald Heifetz as cited in Johnson, 2017) as appropriate theories to adapt during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Effective leaders must possess the essential leadership skills and qualities to navigate through difficult times and ensure the continuity of learning. The success of the implementation of the BE-LCP in the Schools Division of the City of Batac serves as a testament to the importance of effective leadership in education during crises. Future studies can further explore the impact of leadership styles and strategies in other educational settings and contexts during crises.

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